Afghanistan has experienced decades of war, beginning with the abrupt coup and assumption of power by the PDPA (People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, or Afghan Communist Party) in 1979, and continuing through a decade of Soviet occupation from 1979-1989. A period of anarchic rule by rival warlords and mujahideen followed until 1996, when the Taliban took power until 2001. After the Taliban fell in 2001, the administration of Hamid Karzai came to power.[1] Despite nearly a decade of effort at building an Afghan state, the Afghan security forces remain incapable of providing security to much of Afghanistan. As a result, President Karzai has placed warlords into government posts in an effort to prioritize security and stability. Although not an ideal situation, this has been a necessary move in order to achieve a minimal level of stability.[2] However, such a move is a temporary measure at best. Warlords are no substitute for competent Afghan security forces. In order to achieve lasting, competent, representative government in Afghanistan, U.S. forces must partner with and mentor Afghan securities forces and develop them into an institution capable of holding Afghanistan together. U.S. forces should follow three key principles in doing so. First, U.S. forces should promote certain aspects of Afghan culture that will encourage cooperation and at the same time discourage the population from allying with the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, while minimizing or negating the cultural aspects that the Taliban and Al-Qaeda exploit. Second, U.S. forces must creatively find ways to maximize interaction with the population to influence behavior and popular opinion. Third, U.S. forces must resist the western impulse for high technology solutions, and instead must look to implement low tech solutions to everyday problems.

Many Afghan cultural experts note the importance of Pashtunwali, a strict code of behavior that describes how to live an honorable life as a Pashtun. Among the principles of Pashtunwali, which is perhaps not entirely different than codes of other nomadic peoples such as

the Arabs, is the concept of *melmastia*, or hospitality.[3] According to Pashtunwali, hospitality is normally offered to foreigners, and disgrace comes upon a man who does not offer hospitality to a visitor.[4] U.S. forces should look to provide Afghans with every opportunity to extend hospitality to them. Simply greeting Afghans in their native language and sharing family pictures, along with the unstated assumption that U.S. forces can bring power, prestige, and money to an individual, may result in hospitality being offered. Such methods are not rocket science but common sense, yet they still elude many people. In the event that hospitality is extended, it should be accepted immediately and most graciously. It is an insult not to do so.

Once hospitality has been offered, accepted, and given, a bond is created between the giver and receiver that can prove extremely beneficial. It can help create an ally in an area where allies were rare or non-existent, can help to create a human intelligence source (or even a network of sources), can help to convince an Afghan to consider a compromise with a rival ethnic group, or even to share a scarce resource when this would not have been considered before. Of course, such events will open the Afghan to retaliation from groups opposing U.S. forces and/or the host government, so care must be taken to safeguard the identity of any Afghan inspired to such acts, as much as possible. However, since lasting change in a population can only be achieved internally, U.S. forces should make every effort to provide Afghans the opportunity to extend hospitality to them, and when offered, to accept it most graciously, and then to use the resulting relationship to accomplish assigned missions.

At the same time, U.S. forces must take care to minimize or negate the aspects of Pashtunwali that are exploited by the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. In the event that an Afghan is accidentally killed by U.S. forces, the Pashtunwali concept of *badal* (revenge) will require the relatives to avenge his death. However, an immediate and sincere apology to the relatives of the

deceased by the immediate U.S. commander made in the presence of a local elder and/or mullah, along with a prompt payment of money to the relatives can at times greatly lessen the need for revenge. Another possibility of using Pashtunwali to minimize the power of warlords is to reinforce the concept of the *jirga* (tribal assembly), which may be the closest possible political process to democracy in rural Afghanistan. Ideally, U.S. forces will positively affect an area, and then a *jirga* may vote to reinforce the relationship and/or adopt U.S. recommendations. Positive initial personal interactions are key to tapping into a *jirga's* potential.

Second, U.S. forces must seek to maximize professional personal interactions to positively influence the Afghan public to support the host nation government. Senior political and military leaders normally understand this need, but in order to reach a critical mass, or to reach enough of the population to make a difference, more interactions are needed across all ranks of the military and across all U.S. government agencies. U.S. military units and military advisors must be trained and directed to conduct this type of interaction at multiple levels with Afghan security forces. All branches of the U.S. military services can and must play a role in this mission. In addition, U.S. civilian government employees must be trained to conduct a similar partnership and mentoring with their Afghan counterparts. All U.S. government employees headed to Afghanistan should receive cultural awareness, cultural understanding, and language training, and directed to mentor their Afghan counterparts.

Third, U.S. forces must make a conscious effort to employ low tech solutions instead of high tech solutions. In other words, whatever the coalition forces provide in equipment, Afghan forces must be able to maintain in the long run.[5] It is also important to recognize the negative effect that many high-tech systems have on the Afghan public's perception of the mission. The use of armed unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) is a perfect case in point. As Stephen Tanner

notes, the use of armed UAVs against a country that has none, although the temptation to use this technology is great, may ultimately "wreak more destruction on the user's moral authority than it would on the enemy."[6] Certainly, the image of the United States has suffered from the use of armed UAVs, particularly in the Muslim world. The use of armed UAVs in areas in which U.S. forces are conducting stabilization and reconstruction operations is questionable. Ideally, the use of armed UAVs should be restricted to only the most urgent circumstances involving the most dangerously indoctrinated enemy of the United States – and rarely if ever used against enemy with no ambitions outside of Afghanistan.

A second case of low technology trumping high technology solutions involves intelligence collection to promote the rule of law. Although signals intelligence collecting methods have been dramatically improved in recent years, the creation of human intelligence networks often has a much more pervasive effect on a population, because the enforcement of standards comes from within the society, instead of being imposed upon it. Additionally, the Afghan judiciary (in whatever form) will likely regard human intelligence reports (coming from Afghans) as more reliable than signals intelligence collected by coalition forces that may not be easily used in a courtroom.

In summary, while executing a strategy of using warlords as bureaucrats to provide a minimal amount of rural stability and security while the Afghan central government and security forces are still forming, U.S. forces must be trained and capable of competently using elements of the tribal code of Pashtunwali to positively shape events and public opinion. Moreover, U.S. forces must look to maximize the opportunities to mentor and positively affect Afghan counterparts in all levels and disciplines of the military as well as U.S. government civilian officials. Lastly, low technology solutions offer an ability not only for the Afghan counterparts

to quickly train to required competence levels, but also to be able to maintain the equipment. Moreover, low technology solutions may not alienate elements of the population against us to the extent that high technology solutions will.

[1] Tanner, *Afghanistan: A Military History from Alexander the Great to the Fall of the Taliban*, p.243-287.
[2] Mukhopadhyay, *Warlords as Bureaucrats: The Afghan Experience*, p.20-21.
[3] Schofield, *Afghan Frontiers: Feuding and Fighting in Central Asia*, p.116.
[4] Schofield, *Afghan Frontiers: Feuding and Fighting in Central Asia*, p.119.
[5] Cordesman, *Winning in Afghanistan: Creating Effective Afghan Security Forces*, p.91-93.
[6] Tanner, *Afghanistan: A Military History from Alexander the Great to the Fall of the Taliban*, p.325.

Bibliography

Cordesman, Anthony H., Adam Mausner and David Kasten. *Winning in Afghanistan: Creating Effective Afghan Security Forces.* Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Washington, D.C., May 2009.

Giustozzi, Antonio. *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop: The Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan.* New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2008.

Giustozzi, Antonio. *Empires of Mud: War and Warlords in Afghanistan.* New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2009.

Misra, Amalendu. *Afghanistan: The Labyrinth of Violence*. Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2004.

Mukhopadhyay, Dipali. *Warlords as Bureaucrats: The Afghan Experience*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, D.C., 2009.

Neumann, Ronald E. *The Other War: Winning and Losing in Afghanistan.* Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, Inc., 2009.

Saikal, Amin. *Modern Afghanistan: A History of Struggle and Survival.* New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

Schofield, Victoria. *Afghan Frontier: Feuding and Fighting in Central Asia*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

Tanner, Stephen. *Afghanistan: A Military History from Alexander the Great to the Fall of the Taliban*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2002.